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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Liberal International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Call to End the Political and Humanitarian Crisis in Burundi

Liberal International (LI) and the Africa Liberal Network (LI cooperating organisation) welcome and fully support the latest statement of the United Nations Security Council, as released on 5 April 2018, which called "on all stakeholders and in particular the authorities in Burundi to commit to a dialogue with the opposition and reach an agreement ahead of the 2020 elections."

This statement would like to pay particular attention to the deteriorating political and humanitarian crisis in Burundi which remains unresolved despite the plea on the part of the UN Security Council and other international bodies.

Recognizing that:

- The political, human rights and humanitarian crisis in Burundi has worsened since the country was first plunged into chaos in April 2015 when President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to run for a disputed third term
- President Nkurunziza obtained power only after a brutal civil war that lasted from 1993 to 2006, killing about 300 000 Burundians
- The referendum held on 17 May, which seeks to lift the limits on presidential terms, is an attempt by Nkurunziza to hold on to power until 2034 – and possibly longer
- According to a recent *Human Rights Watch Report*, the Constitutional referendum took place amid widespread abuse, fear, and pressure – a climate that is clearly not conducive to a free choice
- According to the latest UN estimates, some 180,000 people remain displaced within Burundi and more than 429,000 have sought refuge across its borders

Stressing on the fact that:

- The latest developments in Burundi are against the spirit of the Arusha Agreements reached in 2000, which ended the civil war in Burundi
- In 2015, when Nkurunziza ran for a third term, a conflict erupted resulting in the death of 1200 people and 400,000 more were displaced and fled the country
- If President Nkurunziza secures a third term, this will likely take the country back into a violent conflict as there are reports already claiming that there is a threat of increased tensions, and violence between rebel groups and armed forces
- The leader of the opposition coalition, Agathon Rwasa, has rejected the results of the referendum and alleged of the fact that government forces had arrested opponents ahead of Thursday's ballot and threatened to assassinate those who voted against amending the constitution
- The Government's decision to suspend all cooperation and collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) is indicative of its implicit participation in human rights violations and complete disregard for the rule of law more broadly

Emphasizing that:

- African leaders should know when to step down and respect their countries' constitutions and rule of law
- The abuse of constitutions and amendment of term durations only serves leaders' narrow political interests at the cost of the people
- The constant suppression and intimidation of opposition parties, their leaders and supporters in Burundi is a growing threat and healthy democracies allow for opposition and their right to build a support base, campaign and compete in fair elections
- Reports of media censorship, the abuse of the national armed forces and the Burundian government's withdrawal from the International Criminal Court in October 2017 serves to highlight the matter in which President

Nkurunziza's rule has taken a dangerous authoritative turn that only seeks to consolidate his power with no consideration for the lives of Burundians

- President Nkurunziza has an obligation to his countrymen to adhere to the rule of law, and an obligation to the international community to respect the Rome Statute, cementing an international standard of peace and security in Central Africa

Recalling:

- Liberal International's Oral Statement before the 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council calling on "all UN voices to exert all of their diplomatic, logistical and financial influence for the rapid deployment of peace-keeping troops to Burundi"
- Liberal International's World Today Resolution to the 70th LI Anniversary Congress in Andorra which called upon the African Union to pressurise President Nkurunziza and his Government into a complete restoration of democracy and sanctions for those responsible for crimes against humanity

Calls on:

- The United Nations, the Southern African Development Community and the African Union to intervene and encourage President Nkurunziza to step down peacefully as to avoid more bloodshed
- African governments to speak out against this ill-advised move in an attempt to curb the increasing move towards third or unlimited terms
- President Nkurunziza to halt the suppression of opposition and allow for a peaceful transfer of power
- President Nkurunziza to restore cooperation with the office of OHCHR
- The United Nations to set up an independent commission in order to investigate all crimes committed by the Burundian government against innocent civilians, leaders of the opposition and journalists and bring all those responsible to justice
- On the African Union to impose sanctions on Burundi and suspend its voting rights

Commits:

- For liberals in government and opposition to continue to raise awareness of the worsening situation in Burundi and seek justice for the Burundian people